

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 6549

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SUBJECT: JEWISH EMIGRATION

REF: MOSCOW 3989

1. SUMMARY. SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRATION IS STILL RUNNING ABOUT FORTY PERCENT BELOW 1974 FOR SAME BASIC REASONS GIVEN IN REFTEL. MANY EMIGRANTS CONTINUE TO POSTPONE APPLICATIONS TO LEAVE BECAUSE THEY SENSE EMIGRATION ATMOSPHERE IS NEGATIVE AND THAT TIME IS NOT RIGHT TO APPLY. PERCEPTION OF SOME JEWS THAT U.S. SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL IS DECREASING MAY HAVE FURTHER NEGATIVE EFFECT. END SUMMARY.

2. LITTLE CHANGE HAS BEEN NOTED IN JEWISH EMIGRATION SINCE REFTEL, WHICH ANALYZED CAUSES OF DECREASING NUMBER OF EMIGRANTS THIS YEAR. AS OF THE END OF APRIL, TOTAL JEWISH EMIGRATION IS ABOUT FORTY PERCENT BELOW 1974'S FIRST FOUR MONTHS. IF THE PRESENT PACE CONTINUES, SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 13,000 AND 14,000 JEWS (DEPENDING ON WHETHER DUTCH EMBASSY MOSCOW OR ISRAELI EMBASSY WASHINGTON FIGURES ARE USED FOR ESTIMATE) WILL LEAVE THE SOVIET UNION THIS YEAR, OR ABOUT 34-38 PERCENT BELOW 1974 TOTALS.

3. THE SAME BASIC FACTORS ARE PRESENT TO KEEP EMIGRATION
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LEVEL DOWN: PERIODIC HARASSMENT OF APPLICANTS AND WELL-KNOWN

JEWISH ACTIVISTS, OCCASIONAL MISTREATMENT OF JEWS AT MOSCOW SYNAGOGUE (AS DURING PASSOVER), SELECTED REFUSALS OF APPLICANTS IN CERTAIN REGIONS AND IN CERTAIN PROFESSIONS, MEDIA ANTI-EMIGRATION CAMPAIGN (WHICH, HOWEVER FELL OFF IN LATE APRIL AND EARLY MAY, PROBABLY BECAUSE OF SPACE DEVOTED TO 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF END OF WAR), VARIETY OF SHOW CASES (SHTERN, LEVIYEV, NASHPITS/TSETLENOK AND MOST RECENTLY CASE OF GOLDSHTEYN BROTHERS IN TBILISI WHO REPORTEDLY MAY SOONBE TRIED FOR "ANTI-SOVIET" ACTIVITIES), AND CONTINUATION OF AUTHORITIES' ATTEMPTS TO CUT DOWN COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN SOVIET JEWS AND THE WEST.

4. ALL OF THESE FACTORS HAVE COMBINED TO GIVE NEGATIVE CAST TO EMIGRATION ATMOSPHERE, AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN DECISION BY PROSPECTIVE EMIGRANTS ON WHETHER TO APPLY FOR EXIT. OUR CONTACTS HERE SAY THAT NUMEROUS EMIGRANTS IN POSSESSION OF INVITATIONS TO ISRAEL CONTINUE TO HOLD BACK APPLICATIONS WHILE WAITING TO SEE IF ATMOSPHERE CHANGES. HIGH PERCENTAGE, HOWEVER, REPORTEDLY CONTINUE TO ASK FOR RENEWAL OF INVITATIONS (WHICH ARE GENERALLY VALID FOR SIX MONTHS) AT NETHERLANDS EMBASSY, INDICATING THEY ARE POSTPONING, RATHER THAN DROPPING, THEIR INTENTION TO EMIGRATE.

5. ONE FURTHER RECENT FACTOR WHICH MAY HAVE SOME NEGATIVE EFFECT ON EMIGRATION LEVEL IS MIDEAST SITUATION AND FEELING HELD BY SOME SOVIET JEWS THAT U.S. IS "ABANDONING" ISRAEL. EMOBOFF WAS BESIEGED BY JEWS AT MOSCOW SYNAGOGUE MAY 10 WITH QUESTIONS ABOUT "CHANGES" IN U.S. POLICY TOWARD ISRAEL. PERCEPTION SEEMED TO BE THAT U.S. PLANNED TO REDUCE SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL IN LIGHT OF ISRAELI UNWILLINGNESS TO COMPROMISE, BREAKDOWN OF STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH, AND CONSEQUENT U.S. REASSESSMENT OF POLICY IN MIDDLE EAST.
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